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ABSTRACT

The document is part of a series that reports the findings and accomplishments of the Models for Career Education in Iowa project which was initiated to research, define, and describe an emerging concept of career education. The focus of the report is on the process of career choice and career decision making. Career choices are too often made on the basis of social myths, occupational information acquired in school, and the need for work to ensure economic survival. These decisions are influenced by family and educational experiences. The development of a "work self" is an important step. The conclusion is reached that any attempt to better prepare young people to make the career decision with which they are confronted should take into account the ongoing economic, social, and political changes within society. (Author/EC)

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Models for Career Education in Iowa

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CAREER DECISION MAKING IN THE CAREER EDUCATION PROCESS

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Iowa a place to grow

Department of Public Instruction

Models for Career Education in Iowa

CAREER DECISION MAKING IN THE CAREER EDUCATION PROCESS

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from Career Education Division
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Grimes State Office Building
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Under Supervision of
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PREFACE

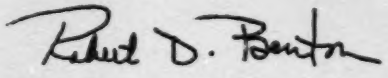
Career Education - Is it good for kids? -- That's a question that has prompted many of us to search for a greater understanding of the concept and to reassess the types of experiences our educational programs provide. This search is resulting in a growing commitment to assure curriculum objectives and activities that provide career education experiences for all students.

An exemplary project, Models for Career Education in Iowa, was initiated in 1971 through the Iowa Department of Public Instruction. The purpose of the effort was to research, define, and describe an emerging concept of career education and to suggest possible approaches for implementation in grades K-8. In 1972 the project was expanded to include the curriculum of high school students.

The project is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction in cooperation with Iowa State University and nine local school districts. The project staff, under the direction of Dr. Alan Kahler, Iowa State University, is working with the following local schools: Shenandoah, Humboldt, Davenport, Marshalltown, Carroll, Sheldon, Osceola, South Winneshiek, and Springville Community School Districts. The third party evaluation is being provided by the Iowa Center for Research in School Administration under the leadership of Dr. Ralph Van Dusseldorp and Dr. Walter Foley.

A number of workshops were conducted involving participating school staff and outside resource persons with various backgrounds and expertise. These workshops have provided a multi-discipline approach in establishing understanding and agreement of a set of basic objectives of career education. During the summer of 1973, staff from each of the nine districts participated in workshops to prepare first draft curriculum materials for use in the respective school settings during the 1973-1974 school year.

The publications which follow were developed as part of the responsibility of project participants and staff to provide visibility to the findings and accomplishments of the project. These guidelines and instructional materials are provided at this time to assist local school personnel interested in initiating programs, services, and activities for their students.



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CAREER DECISION MAKING IN THE CAREER EDUCATION PROCESS

Historical Context

In primitive societies the process of career choice presented few problems because tradition and role expectations clearly defined what was expected of the individual in light of his/her age, sex, and parental background. Moreover, as in the words of Emile Durkheim, the primitive society was characterized by "mechanical solidarity"--everyone did similar things. Conditions in a complex industrial society are quite changed. The complex society is characterized by "organic solidarity," in which social cohesiveness is predicted not on the similarities that exist between individuals, but on their differences.

"Organic solidarity" is a product of population growth and the industrial and subsequent technological revolutions. Specializations within job functions created a situation in which individual differences also signified a greater interdependence between members of society. These changes have taken place structurally but without the broad recognition of the need to reassess our thinking on factors which motivate individuals to make career decisions.

Warmed Over Myths

Social myths have great appeal because they are often based on conditions which are perceived as having been true at one time, and form the basis for many things which are felt to be good about the present state of affairs. Esther Milner in the Failure of Success: The Middle Class Crisis identifies two broadly held social myths, she labels them: the Fallacy and the Dream. Dr. Milner writes:

> Most of us subscribe so strongly to the Fallacy (that high occupational and consumer status will somehow transform us into happy "whole" beings) and the Dream (anyone can succeed if he only tries hard enough) that these two beliefs can be considered the middle class's "axioms of life." Yet these two beliefs, developed during and relatively appropriate to an earlier period of our history, no longer have a realistic base because of irrevocably changed social and economic conditions.

The 19th century concept of Social-Darwinism that material success indicated that one was a member of the elect and entitled to whatever personal wealth could be accummulated has not died an easy death. Conditions have changed in America; the ethic supporting the reasons why we work is undergoing discernable change. In this regard we find many in-

dividuals concerned with work and its relationship to one's identity supporting a definition of work similar to that proposed by C. Gilbert Wrenn in an essay, "Career Guidance For a New Age."

> I interpret (work) to mean any activity in which one engaged, whether for pay or not, and which one saw as contributing to a sense of personal significance or the enhancement of the welfare of others.

In an earlier publication in this series, "Career Education and the World of Work," work was defined in the broadest sense as "purposive activity undertaken by an individual for remuneration, enjoyment, personal enrichment or other vocational or avocational rewards."

These definitions recognized that more traditional definitions of work tend to rob many individuals of a sense of self-worth by eliminating, at least by inference, leisure time activities and non-competitive human welfare activities from the constructive status context of work.

Occupational Information Not Enough

A cursory examination of a publication in this series, "Career Development Model and Explanation," will reveal the interrelatedness of the two major concepts, the self-concept and the world-of-work concept. In the past, guidance counselors, teachers, and others concerned with aiding students in making career decisions placed a strong emphasis on the dissemination of occupational information. The counselor or teacher role was to aid students directly in gaining information or making pragmatic decisions based on factual information. As Carroll Miller observed in an essay, "Historical and Recent Perspectives on Work and Vocational Guidance":

> There was little room in this pattern of thinking for such ideas as meeting needs or values of the individual, or helping the individual achieve self realization through occupation by discovering an occupation congruent with his self concept.

Traditional modes of stressing the dissemination of career information and aiding in a scientifically calculated career decision making approach was not only impersonal, it ignored many of the economic, social, political, and moral implications that the career decision making process had for an individual. This approach reinforced pre-existing stereotypes about the relative status of different occupations. A more dynamic approach as defined by Carroll Miller would include:

> A reinterpretation of status as being within one's own group (Benort-Mullyn labelled this situs, 1944), a greater appreciation of the struggle of the total groups to rise by

> supporting each other, and a clearer understanding of the probability that a very large number of workers will build their working lives out of sequences of jobs which may or may not add up to neat forward progressions . . . .

The dangers of reinforcing an outmoded 19th century status orientation of occupations without concern for the relationship between the individual and his/her society is not only unproductive but politically and socially dangerous. Prior to Watergate Esther Milner wrote:

> In a society where entry into high status occupations has become one of the few avenues to higher social status remaining to the individual, and where high status has great personal meaning, such occupations are particularly appealing to persons with strong feelings of personal inadequacy; too often, a young man's motive for choosing to enter a professional occupation is this desire to acquire some basis for a feeling of self-worth. Such a person is more likely to be willing to discard at least minor moral scruples, if such discard is necessary to maintain this status, than is the person who has more dependable bases for feelings of self-respect.

Work and the Process of Need Fulfillment

Work as a mode of maintaining economic survival was at one time a meaningful concept. Survival has been assured to most Americans even though hunger and privation are still everyday realities for a small percentage of people. If one examines Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, it becomes obvious that one of the tasks confronting many Americans is concerned with finding psychologically meaningful experiences through work. As Aaron Levenstein wrote in "Work and Its Meaning in an Age of Affluence,"

> . . . this new secular society must find an ethos through which personal effort and human involvement can still be instrumental in satisfying psychological needs and providing mental . . . and spiritual health. For regardless of what automated production can do for man's physical well being--indeed because of what automation achieves for him in material affluence--man faces more keenly than ever the problem of purposeful effort.

Levenstein further elaborates:

> As individual material needs are met with increasing ease, social responsibility will have to become a more persuasive motivating factor . . . The new incentives will have to derive from man's realization that he stands in a new relationship to society.

C. Gilbert Wrenn perceives the need to place more stress on individuals and their human relations and less on technology. Wrenn notes that the present climate

> . . . calls for a new ethic, an ethic which controls the impact of technology upon the human qualities of love and of concern for one another's own capacity to care.

Carroll H. Miller sees economic survival as it relates to work being replaced by a higher level need which Maslow termed "self-actualization." Miller contends that

> . . . work is increasingly valued or devalued not in terms of a moral imperative to work, not alone as an unfortunate but necessary means for economic survival, but as a way of organizing life in some psychologically meaningful and need fulfilling way.

Work-Emergent Social Groups

Super has called for an "all class theory of vocation guidance, as contrasted with a middle class theory." A theory which will place adequate stress on "socioeconomic status and its nominal concomitants." One which will provide the necessary guidance from elementary school through later years of employment.

(a) Young Adult

The young worker may be as stereotyped and discriminated against as anyone in the job market. Carroll H. Miller noted that the commonly assumed correlation between levels of education and levels of employment is not valid.

Miller has also noted that in very simple, primitive societies cultural influences may impinge on developing individuals at rates closely approximating the biologically regulated processes which determine readiness for cultural experiences.

In the modern industrial nations individuals often experience what Miller calls discontinuity between aspects of their development. This discontinuity is still operative after the granting of full legal adult status at age eighteen as the society fails to provide meaningful entry level job roles for young people.

(b) Women and Minorities

The following table appears in Man and His Work: Conflict and Change by George Ritger:

TABLE I

Projected Occupational Distribution for 1970 for White Males, Nonwhite Males, and Females Between 35 and 44 Years of Age

	% of Females (35-44)	% of Nonwhite Males (35-44)	% of White Males (35-44)
Professional and managerial	8.0	8.5	25.0
Clerical and sales	19.0	8.0	13.0
Craftsman and operators	7.0	35.0	42.5
Private household workers	1.0	.4	
Other service workers	5.0	10.6	3.5
Laborers, except farm	0.1	15.0	3.5
Farmers and farm managers	0.2	1.5	2.5
Farm laborers		5.0	0.8
Not in the experienced labor force (including occupations not reported)	59.7	16.0	9.2
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Adapted from Daniel O. Price, "Occupational Changes Among Whites and Nonwhites with Projections for 1970, "Social Science Quarterly 49 (1968), 571.

Blacks and women have been actively discriminated against across all levels of the job spectrum. Job mobility which carries with it the notion of upward mobility cannot be so easily assumed. As blacks and women become more aggressive in their pursuit of jobs which have not traditionally been open to them, they can expect to encounter increased hostility and renewed alienation.

Work-Self A New Ethic

Carroll H. Miller is his essay, "Historical and Recent Perspectives on Work and Vocational Guidance," makes the statement:

> The extent to which the ideal of the use of the individual has been supplemented or perhaps displaced by the group is by no means clear, but it is evident that the ferment is underway.

The increased specialization of this post industrial age has served to isolate each segment of the larger society so that in the words of Esther Milner,

> . . . each specialized part of our society has become so isolated in its special function that it is no longer able to understand, respect, appreciate and accommodate to the other parts essential function.

Milner notes that as a result the "fragmentation and specialization" of work most individuals do not gain much "creative satisfaction" from their participation in the work process. Milner recognizes the "creative needs" of an individual as basic, so that the thwarting of these needs may have dangerous consequences.

> I have . . . stated my belief that the creative self-expressive needs of man, whether the individual is aware of their existence or not, are every bit as compelling in his life as are more basic biological needs. It follows that where a society does not provide, teach, and recognize as worthy, channels of expression diverse enough to allow for the wide range of positive human creative behavior (in which I include creativity in human relations) a tendency is fostered for man's creative needs to be displayed to bizarre, compulsive and anti-social avenues of expression.

It is Milner's contention that the dual forces of competitiveness in our society and "the intentional commercial stimulation of our material desires" constantly places before us the most perfect models. This results in many people in a "fear in doing anything at which we might fail."

Levenstein wrote in "Work and Its Meaning in an Age of Affluence,"

> In our American society, the only reason that can justify greater individual exertion is the need of society itself.

Many career educators have noted that individuals in our society can expect to change jobs several times in their career. The needs of society and the certainty of change would seem to be two factors in career decision making worthy of note. Milner states emphatically that:

> We must make our own emerging humanity the reference point of our economic and social life: we must use this growing understanding as the basis for evaluating and changing our economic, social, technological, political, legal forms and practices.

In the words of Levenstein,

> . . . this generation must come to look upon work as the link between themselves and the most important fact of reality, namely, the larger social groups--that is to say, the nation and indeed the world.

Institutional Roles in Aiding Career Decision Making

The Family

Many roles traditionally thought of as eminating from the family have in many instances been abrogated to other social institutions. As the proportion of families making their living through agriculture gradually changed, Blocher noted, "the primary pattern of family organization changed from an economic to a social model." Economic security and the accumulation of material wealth have become less important functions of the family.

The emerging model of the family has been labelled by many sociologists the "conjugal family." Marriage within this structure has been viewed as a "joint career." This structure results in a more democratic, shared family experience in which, in the words of Blocher, "roles and responsibilities within the marriage tend to be shared on a flexible and dynamic partnership basis." The conjugal family's contribution to the career development process in which its members are involved tends to be in the area of human relations skills. This family places its stress on the optimum development of individual family members.

Education

The role of education in fostering student involvement in a process which will aid the student in making wise career decisions and concomitantly contributing to the well being of society has been well stated by Aaron Levenstein in "Work and Its Meaning in an Age of Affluence."

> It would be imprudent to suggest that any one institution alone will resolve the crisis created by the progressive industrialization of society, but education is in a strategic position to help foster in the individual a sense of purpose in the work he does . . . The critical need is to convey to the worker or student as potential worker, that those who advance the growth of society by the task they perform at work are carrying out a significant social purpose, one that links them directly to the roots of contemporary society.

The developments within the career development process through which a child passes while in the formal institution of the school and in other informal coinciding experiences are well defined in other publications in this series. In this regard, "Career Development Model and Explanation" describes the model developed in the project, "Models for Career Education in Iowa," and the phases of development as used in that model. Other publications describe the implementation of the program in the various phases, the world of work and the self-concept in career education, and the philosophy undergirding this program.

Career patterns can be dissected, examined and studied as one examines careers. Recognizing that the variations that exist between career patterns are extreme, Ritger in Man and His Work: Conflict and Change illustrates these two career patterns as outlined by Miller and Form.

Males

1. Preparatory period (prior to the beginning of occupational life; important variables are family background and education).
2. Initial period (individual enters active work life in his first job, usually while he is still in school).
3. Trial period (between the individual's first full-time job and movement into a permanent position).
4. Stable period (some degree of occupational permanency).
5. Retirement.

The preceding five-step approach fits males in our society, while females go through an eight-stage career pattern.

Women

1. Preparatory.
2. Transitional (working and dating).
3. Marriage (generally entails withdrawal from the work force).
4. Marital adjustment.
5. Settled domesticity.
6. Period of divided interest (may re-enter work force).
7. Period of biological risk (husband may die) and preparation for leaving the work force.
8. Retirement and widowhood.

Obviously these two outlines are formalized and represent fairly stereotyped models of career patterns. Many alternatives have been defined especially by women in recent years. These models are very middle class and non-representative of the career patterns of economic and some ethnic minority families.

Another approach to examining patterns that emerge within the career process might be through the examination of developmental tasks. The most noted life stage model was developed by R. J. Havighurst in Human Development and Education. Havighurst defines a developmental task as:

> . . . a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of an individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty with later tasks.

A sociological approach to the examination of careers developed by Erving Goffman and discussed by Ritger in Man and His Work: Conflict and Change is called "symbolic interactionism." In "symbolic interactionism" we study roles as if the participants were actors. This allows for an examination of how the actor interacts with the social structure within which he/she resides, as well as how the actor responds to communication (including non-verbal as well as verbal) with other actors in response to any behavior.

A similar approach also described by Ritger is called "role theory." Ritger defines the use of "role theory":

> We can learn much about occupational life by systematically analyzing the positions, roles, role pressures, and role sets of any and every occupation.

Conclusions

Any attempt to better prepare young people to make the career decision with which they are confronted will have to be one which is respectful of the economic, social, and political changes which this nation has undergone and is undergoing. Aaron Levenstein notes:

> Man's alienation from himself, a reflection of his alienation from the society in which his self must exist is promoted today by the ideology of a business system that clings to the individualism of a pioneer community long since replaced by an integrated community.

The "Models for Career Education in Iowa" project has been seemingly obsessed with the individual's self-concept and the factors which influence its development. The process of career development is a sometimes tedious, sometimes painful, and always a complex one. In the words of Esther Milner:

> We've developed gadgets that have given us everything else we've ever consciously wanted or been induced to want: why not a gadget that can take the place of the tremendously difficult, deeply experienced, frequently painful and unconforming, life-long process of self-emergence, self-discovery, and self-development.

The publication, "The Self-Concept in Career Education," discusses in part the need to come to grips with our immediate situation. To find the meaning of our humanity in the present. This need is pointed up in a quote from Milner in statements such as: "How elusory is happiness which is built on 'when I make that killing,' 'when I get that promotion,'

'when I get my degree,' 'when my raise comes through,' then we and those dependent on us will really start to live, become whole people, be happy." Esther Milner suggests that even this "fantasy future" is a more healthy development than were, because of "fiercely competitive academic requirements" or other intense success demands, one experiences "powerlessness." We must attempt to aid children in the process of maximizing the control they have over their own lives. This will be a tremendously difficult task to achieve for those caught in the "culture of poverty."

The career decision making process is complex and does not lent itself to simple models and easily understood definitions. If, however, the agencies involved with the child as he/she matures make a conscious effort to identify and work through their roles in this process children will have a better grasp of who they are and hopefully where they stand in relationship to the greater society.

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